

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE  
PASTOURELLE.

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by

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Is there a flower, to which he points with hand  
Too weak to gather it, already love  
Drawn from love's purest earthly fount for him  
Hath beautified that flower.

--Wordsworth, The Prelude

By Way of Definition.

The study of the Old French pastourelle is a most intriguing proposition. There is a small and surprisingly uniform corpus of perhaps a hundred and fifty pieces, the vast majority of which are to be had in Karl Bartsch's estimable anthology. They date from the last part of the twelfth through the thirteenth centuries: after this time, their popularity seems to have declined sharply.

The pastourelle is a short poem of lyric type, often divided into stanzas of eight to fourteen lines, and generally under sixty or seventy lines in total length. Sometimes there is a refrain, but more often this is not the case. Rhyme, rhythm, and syllabic count are irregular. The genre is distinguishable not by its variable form, but by the homogeneity of its themes. Every poem presents within its limited space, a little dramatic incident, done with conciseness and clarity: which would be rather pleasant, except that each incident has the unhappy tendency to resemble all the others. It is this invariance that gives the pastourelle a separate existence.

Paramount in the conception of the "courtly pastourelle", as W. P. Jones calls it, is the idea of love--nothing so lofty as the fin'amor that we have become so accustomed to in courtly

poetry, but an emotion that is felt elsewhere and that allows for deception, seduction, and, if necessary, force. It is a singularly perverse characteristic, but one that casts some light on the artistic purpose of the genre as a whole.

### The Origins.

The first example of the pastourelle that is preserved is L'autrier just'una sebissa of the Provençal lyricist Marcabru, who wrote in the first half of the twelfth century. We have no direct antecedents of the form--it seems to have sprung full-grown from the courtly tradition. Exactly how or when the genre began is a subject of great debate. Jones traces motifs from "folk" origins, especially the one he calls the "Baffled Knight";<sup>1</sup> Pillet, who considers that the French and Provençal corpora date from the same time, assumes popular origins.<sup>2</sup> Wackernagel and Brakelmann maintain that the French antedates the Provençal, and Gaston Paris and Jeanroy the opposite: and all of these assume some sort of popular influence.<sup>3</sup> Peter Dronke makes the connection between the pastourelle and the Arcadian dream;<sup>4</sup> but then he is a

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<sup>1</sup>W. P. Jones, The Pastourelle (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1931), pp. 187-194.

<sup>2</sup>Emond Faral, La Pastourelle (Romania XLIX, 1923), p. 238.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 238-239.

<sup>4</sup>Peter Dronke, The Mediaeval Lyric (London: Hutchinson, 1968), p. 200.

Latin and not a Romance scholar. The most authoritative study is Faral's, who categorically denies any non-courtly influences. He states flatly:

Genre aristocratique et, nous l'ajoutons, genre  
savant. (5)

Faral, though, is not perfect; and his logic, which holds for part of the literature, does not encompass the whole. He has completely ignored his Types III and IV. F. J. E. Raby, another Latinist, remains non-committal, admitting:

But the last word is hardly said upon this  
subject. (6)

More recent studies have given us dates for the lives of the major poets and their works. It is clear that the Provençal pastourelle was the antecedent of the French, the Provençal examples being of the twelfth century and the French ones primarily of the thirteenth. The Albigensian Crusade beginning in 1209 may be thought of as a terminus ante quem for the Provençal pastourelle and, indeed, for the bulk of the literature, whereas the masters of the French lyric do not appear to have been writing in the genre until the first half of the thirteenth century--Thibaut de Champagne, Guillaume le Vinier. It is, then, safe to

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<sup>5</sup>Faral, Op. Cit., p. 236.

<sup>6</sup>F. J. E. Raby, A History of Secular Latin Poetry in the Middle Ages (Oxford, 1957), Vol. II, p. 333.

say that the French derives from the Provençal; but in order to determine the real origins of the genre, it is necessary to consult the texts themselves.

### Faral's Types.

For his work on the Old French Pastourelle, Emond Faral has conveniently divided the literature into four major categories, determined by the sequence of events described in the poems. His researches draw not only from the Old French proper, but from Latin examples and Provençal antecedents. His "types" provide a simple way of classifying most of the situations in the poems.

A large proportion of the works extant follow a very simple pattern: a gallant knight is riding along the countryside; he spies a comely shepherdess tending her flock, is moved by lust for her, and attempts to seduce her. The resolution is either that he somehow succeeds or that she puts him off--by her wit, by her stubborn chastity, or by calling for help. The narratives are almost always recounted in the first person--an interesting and partially disturbing fact. The poems--perhaps half to two-thirds of the whole--are mercifully brief. These are the members of Faral's Type I and Type II; the former including cases when the knight succeeds, the latter when he fails.<sup>7</sup>

Types III and IV are quite different indeed. The atmosphere

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<sup>7</sup>Faral, Op. Cit., pp. 209-213.

has become more carefree--there is little of the brutality that remains at least an undercurrent in the poems of the first two categories. In the poems of Type III, the knight serves as a good-natured and condescending observer of an idealized pastoral setting, complete with blundering Robins and graceful Marions. There is little action, and what there is of it is generally pleasant, or at least innocuous. The knight returns as an active member of the cast in Type IV. He is represented here as the authority on love who gives lessons and advice to a group of respectful peasants. Again, little or no action takes place. Understandably, the examples of Type III are rare in comparison with those of the first two types, and those of Type IV are very few indeed.<sup>8</sup>

#### The Analysis of Paul Zumthor.

/ temps printanier/ sujet/ verbe de mouvement/  
                   <sup>1</sup>                  <sup>2</sup>                  <sup>3</sup>  
 / lieu printanier/ élément coordonnant/  
                   <sup>4</sup>                                  <sup>5</sup>  
 / verbe de perception/ objet/  
                                   <sup>6</sup>                                  <sup>7</sup>

Recently, Paul Zumthor has applied more modern concepts to the study of poetry. His key-word is stylization:

Le texte médiéval est essentiellement "style", dans le sens ancien de ce môt. Le seul critère positif

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<sup>8</sup>Ibid., pp. 213-218.

qui le constitue à nos yeux est sa structure formelle: on l'a souvent noté à propos du grand chant courtois. Mais on peut considérer plus généralement, que pour le poète médiéval c'est le caractère conventionnel de la forme qui en fonde l'expressivité.

(9)

And for him, the pastourelle is a fine testing ground. He defines the genre, primarily, as a narrative song that involves a meeting and a proposition of love to a lady. The formula given above is that of the meeting. Elements 1 and 4 are complements, the one of time and the other of place, 2 is the pronoun je, 3 is a verb such as chevaucher or aller, 6 is a verb that embodies the concept of seeing or otherwise noticing, and 7 is a noun with characteristics "human" and "female". Zumthor has chosen a body of 100 pastourelles and 49 non-pastourelles from Bartsch and gives a ready catalogue of the most important elements common to them: e.g. the characteristic of "horse-back riding", present in 44 pastourelles and 7 non-pastourelles; and that of "vegetation", present in 62 pastourelles and 33 non-pastourelles.<sup>10</sup> It is very impressive, but all this cataloguing does not seem to get us too much farther. Zumthor notes curious similarities between the descriptions in the pastourelles and some of the situations in "le grand chant courtois". He appears to conclude that there is some connection.<sup>11</sup> There is.

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<sup>9</sup>Paul Zumthor, Essai de Poétique Médiévale (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1972), p. 108.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., pp. 298-299.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., pp. 303-304.

Cortoisie et Vilainie.

It is said that in order fully to understand poetry in the Middle Ages, one must have a sympathetic feeling for the idea of cortoisie. The term is often bandied and variously defined; but common to all the understandings of the concept is the assumption of a basic standard of behaviour, particularly towards women. In his doctoral thesis, one Stanley Galpin has catalogued the distinguishing factors of cortoisie and its opposite vilainie, using as evidence examples in Provençal and French in the twelfth through fourteenth centuries.<sup>12</sup> It is a rather obvious and cut-and-dried study, but it serves to show the concepts that come most easily.

Galpin gives some twenty characteristics of cortoisie and contrasts them with as many of vilainie. The cortois is richly dressed, polished, noble, soft-spoken, moderate, courageous, humble, considerate, helpful, good, beautiful, intelligent, and half a dozen other things, whereas the vilain is exactly and simply the opposite.<sup>13</sup> Given such an impressive array of wonderful traits presented in so concentrated a fashion, we are likely to see the cortois as a sort of overgrown Mediaeval boy scout; and heaven knows what the vilain can be. There are, however, two other very important characteristics: first, the cortois knows about and

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<sup>12</sup>Stanley Galpin, Cortois et Vilain, thesis (New Haven: Ryders, 1905), pp. 6,9,13-16.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 3.

presumably practices the art of courtly love, and the vilain does neither; and second, the vilain always engages in "guilty physical love",<sup>14</sup> whereas the cortois may or may not do so, depending on the ideas of the various writers and commentators. It is this dichotomy between courtly love (fin'amor) and amor vilaine which poses questions about the interpretation of our subject.

What is courtly love? In Lancelot:

Ainz est amors et corteisie:  
 Quanqu'an puet feire por s'amie. (15)

Simply, the idea of courtly love is based on service to a woman. The virtues of love thus founded are (to present another list) moderation, service, long expectation, chastity, secrecy, and pity.<sup>16</sup> Morton Hunt relates the story of one Ulrich von Lichtenstein, who, at the age of twenty, set his heart on a beautiful princess, performed many ridiculous and several well-nigh impossible feats before winning his lady some fifteen years later, and--upon achieving his goal--left her for a still more inaccessible woman. It had been ten years before he was even able to speak to his princess; and by the time he had won her, he had a wife and children.<sup>17</sup> It is a pathetic tale, but not an

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 63.

<sup>15</sup>Chrestien de Troyes, Lancelot, ed. W. Foerster (Halle: Niemeyer, 1890), vv. 4377-4378.

<sup>16</sup>Denis de Rougemont, Love in the Western World (New York: Pantheon, 1956), pp. 117-118.

<sup>17</sup>M. M. Hunt, The Natural History of Love (New York: Knopf, 1959), pp. 132-139.

unparalleled one. Jaufré Rudel, who was a troubadour and Prince of Blaye in the first half of the twelfth century, was apparently enamoured of the Countess of Tripoli without ever having seen her. According to his *Vida*, he set out on a journey to see her, took ill along the way, and was unable to complete his trip; whereupon the noble lady paid him a visit and allowed him the delicious extravagance of dying in the arms of his beloved.<sup>18</sup> He had lived long enough, however, to write several poems which retain the very essence of courtly love.

Ja mais d'amor no·m gauzirai  
si no·m gau d'est' amor de loing,  
que gensor ni meillor non sai  
vas nuilla part, ni pres ni loing. (19)

There is a detached quality about this passion--for it is an abstraction of the most extreme sort. Not only does it shun the reality of physical love, but it does not even presuppose an acquaintance with the love-object herself. It is not a love of a real woman, but a veneration of the ideal of woman consonant only with an infatuation with love itself. De Rougemont calls attention to the similarities with adolescent love; but perhaps one can go farther and say that courtly love taken seriously ranks as the premier self-pitying, studied institutionalization

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<sup>18</sup>"*Vida*" in F. R. Hamlin, P. T. Ricketts, J. Hathaway, Introduction à l'Etude de l'Ancien Provençal (Geneva: Droz, 1967), pp. 87-88.

<sup>19</sup>"*Lanquand li jorn son lonc en mai*", Ibid., p. 89.

of futility in the history of the world. But courtly love is honest, so far as it goes; Hunt says:

Cortezia, Courtesie, or Frauendienst, as it is also called, began as a game and a literary conceit, but unexpectedly grew into a social philosophy that shaped the manners and morals of the West. It started as a playful exercise in flattery, but became a spiritual force guiding the flatterers... and with wonderfully consistent inconsistency, it exalted at one and the same time adultery and chastity, duplicity and faithfulness, self-indulgence and austerity, suffering and delight. (20)

But what a guiding spiritual force this enforced self-denigration must have been! It strikes one that there must have been a minimum of playfulness in it. Jaufré, for one, seems deadly serious.

Vilainie, the only alternative to this unsavory existence, appears to be even worse. For whereas it was the duty of the cortois to love in this mad fashion, the vilain is ignorant of all refinement in love. His idea of the emotion as purely physical is the object of great censure among courtly poets.

They had no doubt, but represented him consistently as immoral...  
... So thoroughly and intimately was the idea of guilty love associated with the vilain in the minds of the mediaeval poets that what we might call the technical expression for it was the abstract term vileinie. (21)

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<sup>20</sup>Hunt, Op. Cit., p. 131.

<sup>21</sup>Galpin, Op. Cit., p. 71.

Qui par force fame convoite  
le fait vilonnie revoite. (22)

Frere, se dens t'aie,  
ne me quier vilenie,  
car autrui sui amie. (23)

The idea of vilainie is directly counter to that of cortoisie, so naturally it inherits all of the bad attributes that cortoisie lacks. It has the flavor of an abstracted state of unpleasantness created, as it were, to provide a balance to cortoisie.

Generally the cortois were cortois and the vilains vilains; but on occasion a courtly person might perform an act that was vilain, and very seldom a common person might show sentiments beyond those called for by his low position. A thoroughly undemocratic ethic. It is notable that the behaviour we observe in our pastourelles is far closer to vilainie than to cortoisie. And these are people supposedly writing about themselves!

#### Means to an End.

The gallant hero of the poems (at least those of the first two types) has a distinctly non-courtly goal: the seduction or rape of a simple country girl. Valency:

The Pastourelle, it is true, had nothing to do with ladies. It depicted the encounter

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<sup>22</sup>"Perceval", vv. 13115-13116, in Galpin, Ibid., p. 72.

<sup>23</sup>Karl Bartsch, Altfranzösische Romanzen und Pastourelle (Leipzig: Vogel, 1870), II, 14, p. 124.

of a knight with a vilaine, a farm girl or shepherdess. From the psychological point of view, of course, the class distinction is not the essential consideration; what is important is the behaviour attributed to the knight. (24)

Using various means, all of which show a sort of scorn or hatred for the classical woman, the knight--or the author in guise of knight--attempts to lure a young girl into sexual union.

Sometimes he promises gifts:

"si vous donrai riche don,  
escarlante et pelicon,  
la cainture de deus tors." (25)

or even produces a generous (?) offer:

Je m'asis lei la bergiere,  
se l'ai acollee,  
presentai li m'amoniere  
k'est a or broudee  
elle l'ait resgairdee  
ne l'ait pas renfusee;  
je de li mes volonteis fix. (26)

An occasional promise of marriage and riches does wonders:

"dame sereis, se vos voleis,  
de boix et de riviere,  
jamaix aignialz ne gairdereis  
en preit ne en bruiere." (27)

or a spate of well-chosen words:

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<sup>24</sup>Maurice Valency, In Praise of Love (New York: Macmillan, 1958), p. 105.

<sup>25</sup>Bartsch, Op. Cit., II, 68, p. 193.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., II, 16, pp. 127f.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., II, 9, p. 114.

je li dis "bele nee,  
 va du va du va du va  
 bele, je vos aim pieca,  
 vostre amor m'afolera  
 s'ele ne m'est donce."  
 je li dis "ma douce suer,  
 nostre amor m'atalante.  
 en vos servir met mon cuer  
 et trestoute m'entente.  
 je sui vostres sans mentir,  
 je ne m'an kier departir  
 por vent ne por tormente."

(28)

If all else fails, as it does in many cases, the last resort  
 is violence.

lors l'ai enbraissie,  
 en la bouche la baisai  
 et sor l'erbe la getai,  
 si en ai fait mes voloires.

(29)

Quant par ma proiere  
 n'i poi avenir.  
 par les flans l'ai prinse,  
 si la fis chair,  
 levai la pelice,  
 la blanche chemise:  
 a mult bele guise  
 mon jeu li apris.

(30)

After all, the attitude of the knight is a cynical impatience  
 to get on with his business:

Vers la pastoure tournai  
 quant la vi en son destour;  
 hautement la saluai.  
 et di "deus vos doinst bon jour  
 et honour.

(cont.)

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<sup>28</sup>Ibid., III,45, p. 301.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., II,11, p. 118.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., II,76, p. 203.

celle ke ci trove ai  
sens delai  
ses amis serai."

(31)

And, more often than not, he succeeds; and sometimes, the shepherdess is well appeased too.

Quant je vi ke por proier  
ne por prometre juel  
ne la poroier plaixer,  
k'en feisse mon avel,  
jetai lai en mi l'erboie;  
ne cuit pais k'elle ait grant joie,  
ains sospire,  
ces poins tort, ces chavols tire  
et quiert son eschaipement,  
et pues la fix je bien rire,  
tant l'acollai doucement.

A departir me dist "sire,  
per si reveneis sovent;  
vostre jeux pais nen empire,  
muels vaut k'el comencement."

(32)

### L'Echec du Galant.

The examples of Type II are fairly common: and in this case, the knight is vanquished and the maiden saved. A victory for morality, but one in which--often enough --it is fate that conspires against the hero of the poem. It is seldom that the shepherdess makes a case for herself. Often the salvation comes in the form of a villain lover, who appears at an opportune moment, leaving the gallant alone to sing his misfortune (if he is lucky):

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<sup>31</sup>Ibid., II,5, p. 108.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., II,17, p. 129.

Et quant partir m'en cuidai  
 se vi lons l'erboie  
 son ami crier hahai  
 et corne a la voie  
 et disoit "deus, ke ferai?  
 je voi bien, tout perdu ai..."

Quant vi riens n'i conquestai  
 et mon tens perdoie,  
 entreacollant les laissai,  
 dont molt dervoie,  
 et arriere retornai.  
 por moi conforter chantai...

(33)

Sometimes the outcome is less pleasant:

Perrins en a oi la vois,  
 quatis ere les un buisson;  
 adonc en sailli a trois sois,  
 et deus fossez a un baston.  
 qui donc veist par ces marois  
 bregiers venir ca deus ca trois,  
 chacuns en sa main un baston!  
 a Beatris viennent tot droit. ael

(34)

Once in a while the girl will cry for help:

tantost l'alai ambracier;  
 elle crie "aiue!"  
 Robins saut, li fiz Fouchier,  
 Guios, Perrins, et Renniers,  
 a grant aleure.

(35)

lors la pris a acoler,  
 et elle gete an haut cri  
 "Perrinet, trahi, trahi!"  
 du bois prenent a huper,  
 je la lais sanz demorer,  
 seur mon cheval m'en parti.

(36)

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<sup>33</sup>Ibid., II,10, pp. 117f.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., III,13, p. 247.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., II,39, p. 158.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., III,5, p. 234.

And only very seldom will she make a good case for herself:

"Don, hom coitatz de foltage  
jur'e pliu e promet gatge.  
sim fariatz homentage,  
senher", so ditz la vilana;  
"mas ges per un pauc d'intratge  
no volh mon des piuzelatge  
camjar per nom de putana..."  
"Don, oc' mas segon dreitura  
cerca fols sa folatura,  
cortes cortez' aventura,  
et vilas ab sa vilana."

(37)

And from Carmina Burana:

"Quid fecisti," inquit, "prave!  
vae vae tibi! tamen ave!  
ne reveles ulli cave,  
ut sim domi tuta!

"Si senserit meus pater  
vel Martinus maior frater  
erit mihi dies ater:  
vel si sciret mea mater  
cum sit angue peior quater  
virgis sum tributa!"

(38)

In these cases, though, the shepherdess shows herself rather as a highly intelligent and articulate woman; in most others, both where she is won somehow and where she is rescued, she is depicted rather as a dolt.

We may note here that the Marcabrun piece has this interesting reversal of roles: the vilana tells the cortes about courtliness and even invokes it to get rid of him--she acts almost

<sup>37</sup>Marcabrun, "L'autrier jost'una sebissa", in Karl Bartsch, Chrestomathie Provençale (Elberfeld: Friedrichs, 1868), pp. 57-58.

<sup>38</sup>F. J. E. Raby, The Oxford Book of Medieval Latin Verse (Oxford, 1959), 218, pp. 326f.

as a judge in a court of love. No common shepherdess this! The girl in the Latin poem turns out to be a canny and clever maid who uses a purely utilitarian (but effective) argument against her suitor. The one uses the argument of natural law ("segon dreitura") the other that of the law of men. It is not primarily a moral question here. The implication is that these are both artificial shepherdesses in that they speak the language and the logic of the savant; but nowhere is she elevated to the moral stature of the courtly lady.

#### The Good-Natured Pastourelle.

We have several examples in Bartsch (II 22,27,30,36,41,45, 47,55,58,70,73,77; III 11,15,16,20,21,22,24,27,29,30,31,36,37, 41,44,46) of poems in which the lust of a galant for a vilaine is not the theme. In these, the actions are confined to those of shepherds and shepherdesses with the knight in attendance only as an amused spectator:

Far un sentier l'autre jor chevauchois,  
et truis en mi ma voie  
Perrin et Guiot et Rogier  
Loriot Sarot Maroie:  
chascuns mult se cointoie  
et chascune por son bergier...

Je traïs arrier et m'assis en l'erboie  
por esgarder leur joie...

(39)

Of the poems of this type, most show idealized rustics at play

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<sup>39</sup>Bartsch, Altfranzösische, II,77, p. 203.

and are characterized by Gaston Paris as

petits tableaux idylliques pleines de fraîcheur  
et de grâce (40)

but a certain few offend him as introducing strife and violence (Bartsch II 58,77; III 21,22,30) and in general a view of pastoral life he would see as unpleasant.<sup>41</sup> Perhaps he objects to the fact that, in these poems,

quand on se commet au milieu de la bande joyeuse,  
on n'est pas sûr d'en rapporter toutes ses  
dents. (42)

This is a little rough for Arcady--but then, these people make no claim to be Tityruses or Meliboeuses; and their simple divertissements and songs are far from Vergil's Maenalian strains:

do do do do do do do do do do  
do do do do do do do do do dodelle (43)

The peasants whom the hero encounters are not that idealized, and it seems to be that Gaston Paris and other writers cannot face the evidence that their subjects may well not trace their lineage from the lovesick pastors of bucolic tradition or from the robust but not simpleminded folk of reality.

The situations are often in themselves serious but are

<sup>40</sup>Faral, Op. Cit., p. 216.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., p. 216.

<sup>42</sup>Alfred Jeanroy, Les Origines de la Poésie Lyrique en France au Moyen-Age (Paris: Champion, 1965, 4th ed.), p. 42.

<sup>43</sup>Bartsch, Altfranzösische, III,22, p. 259f.

depicted in such a way as to make them appear ridiculous and to exalt the knight further in his stature as an omnipotent but passive viewer. The haughty attitude that leads the gentleman to ravish shepherd lasses is the same one that allows him to sit back on his horse and belittle the entire existence of his lower-class companions. Some of the pieces are pleasant, to be sure, but there remains the germ of disdain.

la muze au grant challeme  
a li uns fors trete...

Cant li uns des autres trois  
oi sa vantance,  
au pies sailli sus tos drois,  
de chanter s'avance,  
car il fu de noviaus res.  
ses hosiaux ot takenes,  
et par grant bobance  
estoit d'un sac afubles.  
coi ke chascuns chante,  
tos jors estoit sa chansons  
"il n'est viande ke vaille les montons."

Li tiers, ke Thieris ot non,  
saut sus ses eschaces.  
au sa main tint un baston  
dont chassoit les vaches...

Celle part vont li bergier  
a grant piperie:  
par la main sans atargier  
prant chascus amie.  
Si ont fait grant vireli.

(44)

It is certainly a gentle sort of fun; almost a tableau idyllique to the heart of Gaston Paris. Yet here too is evidence of the at best condescending attitude of the nobility for the like of Thieus and Gautiers--the slightly forced hyperbole of the descriptions,

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<sup>44</sup>Ibid., II, 30, pp. 147-148.

the almost comic reactions of the shepherds,

an pies sailli sus tos drois  
de chanter s'avance, (45)

the pointlessness of their recreation--and all of this reinforces the air de farce that Faral identifies with this type. At times the atmosphere is far more pronounced, as when the author recapitulates a narrative with the words

Bufte colee  
ioee adentee,  
tel sunt lor avel (46)

or when he recounts a potentially poignant situation in such a way as to make it seem unbearably funny:

trovai pastoret  
ki se gaimentoit...  
  
et li demandai  
por coi il ploroit?  
il me respondit  
"sire, trop l'ai dit;  
mais Perrins a tort:  
a pou ne m'a mort,  
si ne sai por coi. (47)

Apparently Robin has kissed Marot, and she has told Perrin and Quiot, who are after him with their cudgels. In a non-characteristic fatherly way, the knight offers to make peace among the warring factions:

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<sup>45</sup>Loc. Cit., vv. 15-16.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., II, 73, p. 200.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., III, 36, p. 285f.

je les amoinrai  
 et la pais ferai  
 et d'eaus et de toi.

(48)

The attitude, however, is not unlike that of the author of "Autans d'aoust que feuille de boschet":

grant assamblee  
 d'anfanz ai trover

(49)

It is one of "amiable scorn", a mute commentary on the futile existence of the peasants from the rarefied heights of knighthood.

Seldom does the chevalier engage in any important dialogue with the populace; the poems in which this does occur, Faral groups together in Type IV: a class for which he himself has little time:

Dans ces divers poèmes, l'action est  
 insignifiante, ou plutôt elle est nulle:  
 il n'en sera donc pas autrement question  
 en cette place-ci.

(50)

Perhaps he has a right--these poems resemble those of Type III in many ways. But there is a difference here, for the knight shows in these few instances an apparent feeling of comradeship with the rustics; occasionally, he will even ask of their advice. He is far more contemplative and humble than his peers in the other poems, and this frame of mind having taken the edge off his passions,

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<sup>48</sup>Ibid., III, 36, p. 286.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid., II, 73, p. 199.

<sup>50</sup>Faral, Op. Cit., p. 218.

he is a palatable character after all. On one occasion he speaks with a shepherdess about the vilains who are vieing for her favor;<sup>51</sup> on another, lovesick with an "amors vilaine", he stops to talk with a bergère about the merits of love.<sup>52</sup> They address each other as "vous", and he is so impressed with her kindness that he says without any irony:

bele, dex vous vaille  
a ce que panson. (53)

Jehanne presents some sound advice:

"Chevaliers, la joie,  
quant el vient d'amors,  
granz max trex apaie  
et oste dolors,  
et li suens secors  
toute honor mestroie  
en fin cuer joios.  
si volon touz jors  
estre en sa manaie." (54)

The two part company mutually respectful and strengthened in the belief that love is, indeed, the greatest of boons.

Two poems that Faral classifies as Type IV are attributed to one Pierre de Corbie, who calls his shepherds "tu" and expects to be called "vous" in return, but who takes advice from them:

Fensis com fins amoureux  
l'autrier chevauchie... (cont.)

<sup>51</sup>Bartsch, Altfranzösische, II, 53, pp. 172-173.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid., II, 66, pp. 190-191.

<sup>53</sup>Loc. Cit., vv. 28-29.

<sup>54</sup>Loc. Cit., vv. 37-45.

"Robin, mout ies eurous  
 mais savoir voudroie  
 s'onques par nul envious  
 fu t'amie en voie  
 qu'ele se targast de toi..."

"A deu te comant, Robecon,  
 que moustre m'as bone raison"

(55)

and stops to aid them when they are in distress:

Par un ajournant  
 trouvai en un pre  
 un bregier plourant,  
 chenu et melle,  
 esdente devant  
 et descouloure,  
 batu par samblant  
 et mout mal mene.  
 chape ot depanee,  
 coiffe desciree.  
 je l'ai salue:  
 "bregier, s'il t'agree,  
 as tu fait mellee?  
 u as tu este?"

(56)

His manner is brusque, perhaps even more so than that of the knight in "A dous tens pascor" (III,36), the similar situation that we have encountered earlier. We might be inclined to dismiss his feelings as shallow; indeed, his description of the bregier calls to mind a humorous portrait, and his advice

"Diva, fol bergier,  
 pour quoi pleures tu  
 quant pour dosnoier  
 t'a l'en si batu?"

(cont.)

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<sup>55</sup>Ibid., III,33, pp. 279-280.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid., III,34, pp. 281-282.

bon gre t'en savra  
 cele pour qui fu,  
 et si t'en sera  
 guerredon rendu:  
 s'en iert sa pensee  
 envers toi doublee,  
 et t'aimeras plus.

(57)

is meager balm for the poor fellow's wounds. But his outlook is sympathetic, and he is giving a lesson in courtliness to this unlucky swain--a lesson that by virtue of his low birth he is not entitled to have.<sup>58</sup> The poet's formal attitude masks a genuine concern for him.

The poems of Type IV contain a singular reversal of the customary attitude of knight towards peasant as we have seen it described in other pastourelles; behind a formal exterior there is a regard for members of the lower class and a respect for their welfare and attitudes that is absent in most specimens of the genre. The air of condescension is certainly present here; but it is nowhere as pronounced as it is in the examples from Type III, where the high-born disdain shows as a major current in the poetry. Of course, even these works produce no sentiments comparable to those in their more violent cousins.

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<sup>57</sup> Loc. Cit., vv. 29-39.

<sup>58</sup> cf. Galpin, pp. 7-8, 58-66.

### Characterizations.

The denizens of the pastourelle world are by and large a sorry lot. In general their personalities are meager and their intentions generally selfish. The berger and bergere, of course, are portrayed as rather laughable incompetents in most of the poems; the chevalier's actions are--in the poems of Types I and II--at best censurable, and all round his cynicism and scorn show in what he says and does. The poems are told in the supposed point of view of a knight, and they are his perceptions and prejudices that we must understand. That he does not favor himself is no guarantee of his impartiality, but rather as a reflection of his consciousness.

#### I. The Knight.

A far cry from the subtle and courteous heroes we have come to know and love in the rest of mediaeval literature, our galant is a crass disappointment. Instead of good manners and faithfulness, we see in him coarseness and seduction; instead of warm-hearted humanity, haughty self-righteousness. He seeks not a faraway shining goal but a cheap interlude in the grass, a pathetic comedy of his inferiors, and a chance to tell about them.

Ce qu'il demande, c'est le seul plaisir  
de ses sens.

(59)

He seems the exact opposite of the courtly gentleman he is supposed

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<sup>59</sup>Faral, Op. Cit., p. 233.

to be, the parody of an Arthurian hero, deliberately preferring baser adventures to noble quests. What does he do?--He forces his will on a little girl; stands by idly as vilains dance and make music and equally idle when they quarrel and fight, laughs at the trials and tribulations of the peasantry, sits at ease while the entire scenario acts itself out in front of him. He is looking for thrills. How does he try to win the girl? Insignificant gifts or even just promises of them, flattery, ravishment. Altogether, he projects an impression of being extremely petty and more than a little cruel.

### II. The Shepherdess.

In most of these pieces, the role of the shepherdess is a passive one: she is meant to be desired, to be won, to be seduced, and to be left. She is simple and unfamiliar with the wiles of the world. In many cases she is quite young and a virgin:

Quant l'oi despucelee  
si s'est en piez levee,  
en haut s'est escriee.  
"bien vos sui eschapee.  
treze ans a que je fuiree  
par mon escient;  
onques mais n'oi matinee  
que j'amasse tant."

(60)

Perhaps some of her charm is her youth and innocence at the beginning; but by the end, the innocence is gone--and so is her charm. The transformation is quick and complete, from

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<sup>60</sup>Bartsch, Altfranzösische, II, 67, pp. 192f.

"Avoi, chevaliers,  
de foloi parlez..."  
ce li dist la pure;  
"je n'ai de vos cure..."  
"sovant i venez,  
amis, en l'erbaige."

(61)

In other instances she is not pucele in the first place and may actually be looking for something:

s'oi pastoure chantant  
de jolit cuer ameraus  
"si j'avoie ameit un jor,  
je diroie a tous:  
bones sont amors."

(62)

She is generally shown as just the sort of woman that the chevalier is looking for: gullible and easy to buy. In these situations she is no match for the gallant knight who, well versed in the craft, offers her a pair of gloves or a ring for her favors, or offers a tainted promise of marriage. How stupid, we think, to be deluded thus. And even when he uses the extreme measures of force, the shepherdess looks afterwards upon our hero with a cloying adoration:

"ne m'oubliez mie,  
car je sui vostre amie,  
mes revenez souvent."

(63)

"certes, mult m'agree  
quant li plus beals de l'empire  
m'a despucelee."

(cont.)

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<sup>61</sup>Ibid., II, 20, pp. 133f.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid., II, 8, p. 112.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid., II, 62, p. 185.

de sa coloree  
 a s'afiche ostee,  
 si commence a rire,  
 si l'a bien frottee,  
 puis la m'a donee:  
 ne l'os escondire. (64)

Her simplicity is amazing--Faral finds the effect comical,<sup>65</sup>  
 and Jeanroy sees it as disgusting; he notes

Il n'y a un vrai sentiment de pudeur feminine  
 que dans une seule piece (III, 25), ou l'auteur  
 aura sans doute cherche le piquant de la  
 nouveaute. (66)

Jeanroy's cynicism with regard to the lot of the shepherdess is similar to that of the chevalier himself--an attitude that is corroborated in most of the poems, but which has little validity in a few cases that most critics have refused to consider. For on occasion, we do see a downright refusal of the knight by the girl. Not only does this occur in the Provençal and Latin corpora (cf. supra), but also in the less refined world of Old French; in a truncated adventure:

lors me trais vers li  
 de fine amor li pri:  
 ele me respondi  
 " a moi n'atouchies vos ja,  
 car j'ai mignot ami." (67)

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<sup>64</sup>Ibid., II,19, p. 132.

<sup>65</sup>Faral, Op. Cit., p. 229f.

<sup>66</sup>Jeanroy, Op. Cit., p. 21, note 2.

<sup>67</sup>Bartsch, Altfranzösische, II,99, p. 214.

And that finishes that. She remains faithful to her ami and presumably the chevalier goes away. In this piece the shepherdess remains uncensurable and unblemished, and the poet's irony is directed at himself and the conventions under which he lives (de fine amor li pri.).

In other cases when the chevalier is stymied by the arguments of a bergère, it appears that her vocabulary and logic are not to be expected in a rustic setting. Marcabrun's pastora mestissa<sup>68</sup> acts more as a gentlewoman would than a "mongrel shepherdess". She is constructed to conform to a courtly ideal rather than any real model.

There seem to be two types of shepherdess--the simpleminded girl who is bested by the slightly quicker-witted knight, and the wise virgin who extols righteousness. Neither one, we hope, is an accurate representation: the one is a hideous distortion caused by an underlying distaste for lower-class womanhood, and the other is an idealization of wisdom and virtue, a courtly lady in a rustic smock.

### III. The Poor Shepherd.

No one in literature seems as persecuted as the berger in the pastourelle. Most often he is mercifully absent from the poems; he is merely cuckolded:

"certes fole seroi  
se je Robin laissoie..."  
je de li mes volonteis fix.

(69)

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<sup>68</sup>Bartsch, Chrestomathie, p. 58.

<sup>69</sup>Bartsch, Altfranzösische, II, 16, pp. 127f.

If he does arrive on the scene, we see that he is a blundering monster. Ofttimes he comes and rescues his love; and this is pleasant, that he has one, but clearly he elicits scant respect other than as a physical threat. The knight's attitude towards him is based on his own prospects:

De proier fis mon povoir,  
mes il ne l'en fu pas bel  
quant ele vit aparoir  
Guiot qui saut du boschel...  
"mieuz aim cel bergier avoir  
a qui j'ai donee  
ma loial pensee."

(70)

In the poems in which the knight comes upon a group of rustics, Robin fares little better. He is useless and harmless; his games are trivial and his boasts are ridiculous. He can be elated or desolated by the smallest and most ordinary occurrence. He is apt to be toothless, although he is certainly not old: his rough games and violent disposition see to that; and it is likely that he is not going to get much older. His emotions are like little strings that one can pull to make him do things.

Quel sot, qui s'obstine à la poursuite d'un  
agneau dérobé, ou qui se laisse égarer par  
les cris "Au loup! Au loup!" du chevalier. (71)

Faral gives the most grotesquely hilarious example of all:

Mais le mieux trouvé est une pastourelle de  
Jacques de Cambrai. Robin, alerté par les

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<sup>70</sup>Ibid., II, 64, pp. 187f.

<sup>71</sup>Faral, Op. Cit., p. 223.

cris de la bergere, account, brandissant  
 sa massue: "T'a-t-il tonchee?" demande-  
 t-il a Marot. Et elle, a qui les violences  
 du chevalier ont paru douces: "Non point";  
 reponde elle, "rassure-toi i er songe  
 plutot a payer le jongleur, car  
     Il m'a appris a tumer  
     Et jo li ai fait danser  
     Et baler."

Sur quoi, le vilain offre an chevalier,  
 qui n'en peut mais, un present genereux  
 et sangrenu:

    Lors ovrit sa panefiere,  
     Si m'offri de sa manjaille  
     C'un gros pain atout la paille.

(72)

A most pathetic vilain indeed, but one who retains certain  
 moral qualities that the chevalier lacks. He is stupid but  
 kindly.

In the description, the shepard simply lacks. He is  
 more badly off than his female counterpart, and hardly can be  
 a serious rival to a fine galant. At least she is pretty and  
 can sometimes be clever; he is unpleasant looking and is never  
 depicted as having any intelligence whatever. One can sometimes  
 elicit some emotion towards the other characters; but upon  
 examining Robin, one can only turn away and say, "the poor  
 buffoon".

Why the pastorelle?

We have a large number of poems whose major common feature  
 is a plot, the outcome of which is irrelevant to the poems, and  
 whose actions are somewhat demeaning to all concerned. We see  
 an insouciant and irresponsible chevalier, a balmy spring day,  
 ignorant peasants dotting the countryside, and a chance encounter  
 with a girl. What can the appeal of a genre that on top of it

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<sup>72</sup>Faral, Op. Cit., p. 225; Butsch, Op. Cit., III, 48, p. 309-310.

all seems so pointless?

It is of great importance in the interpretation of this problem that each poem is written in the first person. The feeling generated, then, is a personal narration of a train of events by the prime mover in these events. And no matter how seriously one takes the narrative at first, one has the feeling that, as time goes on, the credibility of the author is lost. Can one really imagine that the King of Navarra, a courtly gentleman who wrote the beautiful verses

Quant fine amor me semont,  
Mult me plest et agree,  
Que c'est la riens en cest mont  
Que j'ai plus desirree.  
Or la m'estuet servir  
--Ne m'en puis plus tenir--  
Et du tout obeir  
Plus qu'a riens qui soit nee. (73)

Could write seriously of an attempted seduction of a shepherd girl?<sup>74</sup> Thibaut de Champagne would never write a piece like "J'aloie l'autrier errant"<sup>75</sup> or "L'autrier par la matinee"<sup>76</sup> unless there was a particular reason for doing so. The solution that comes to mind is that the pastourelle as Thibaut knew it was written for fun by a learned author for a learned audience. One could imagine a person of his stature sitting at home and writing about hypothetical shepherds and shepherd girls much more easily than one could think of his leaving his castle to engage in an

<sup>73</sup>Thibaut de Champagne, "Amors me fet commencer", Les Chansons, ed. A. Wallensköld (Paris: Champion, 1925), pp. 48-50.

<sup>74</sup>"L'autrier par la matinee", Op. Cit., pp. 180-182.

<sup>75</sup>Op. Cit., pp. 170-179; Bartsch, III, 4, pp. 231-232.

<sup>76</sup>de Champagne, Op. Cit., pp. 180-182; Bartsch, III, 5, pp. 232-234.

impromptu romp with one of his poorer subjects. Perhaps many poems were written on a given theme by several persons, rather in the manner of a contest--explaining the existence of series of poems with the same unusual opening line, as

Main se leva la bien faite Aelis

or a variant thereof.<sup>77</sup> Clearly, anyway, many of the poems follow a convention in their construction and their wording.<sup>78</sup> Almost certainly the genre was meant as an intellectual plaything: it is the only explanation for the poems. Faral says of them:

Genre aristocratique et, nous l'ajoutons,  
genre savant. (79)

We can add to this, genre frivole.

#### Contributing Factors--I. Folksong.

The question still remains whether one can see any trace of folksong or Classical influences in the development of this genre. Discussion has been heated on both subjects; for just as hard as trying to find influences of this nature is trying to prove that none exists. Of the proponents of the idea that a significant folk element lies within the pastourelle, Brakelmann, who thought

<sup>77</sup>Bartsch, Altfranzösische, II, 80-88, pp. 208-210.

<sup>78</sup>"Zumthor's Analysis", supra.

<sup>79</sup>Faral, Op. Cit., p. 236.

of the genre as "eminently popular",<sup>80</sup> and Wackernagel, who is quoted as having some vision of the common people

mélant a ses danses des chansons  
de cette sorte, (81)

can be dismissed by the simple evidence of the poems themselves. It is impossible to imagine any people at play singing songs insulting of themselves and their mistresses, or yet even providing a major audience for them. One does not think of the reception that Jacques de Cambrai's poem would have had should he have read it before an audience of Robins and Marions. Gaston Paris, on the other hand, admits readily that the *pastourelle per se* is an aristocratic genre; but he claims that the original source for these works was the poetry sung by rustics in May celebrations long thence gone. There is no first hand evidence of this: the genre as we know it retains little if any rusticity. The direct antecedent of the French *pastourelle*, the Provençal, is at least as intellectualized. Ezra Pound, in a chapter on Proença

Whatever the folk element in Provençal poetry  
may have been, it has left scant traces. (82)

Whereas the peasants in the French poems act and are treated as

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<sup>80</sup> Faral, Op. Cit., p. 236.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.; Jeanroy, Op. Cit., p. 18.

<sup>82</sup> Ezra Pound, The Spirit of Romance (Norfolk, Conn.: New Directions, no date), p. 39.

livestock, the ones in the Provençal bear a suspicious resemblance to courtly ladies. Though Pound maintains that the adherents of the cult of Provençal poetry were all those who had "a wit or a voice",<sup>83</sup> it appears that the wittiest and the loudest were the aristocracy.

The poems themselves contain no allusions to spring worship or other indication of popular origin. At times a berger or bergere will sing a song, but it is likely to be the refrain of a love song

"j'amerai, kai ke nuns die,  
Perrin mon amant."

(84)

or a string of **nonsense** syllables

"chibera la chibele douz amis,  
chibera la chibele soiez jolis."

(85)

rather than a song commemorating the season; and this is already once removed from the body of the poem itself. Gaston Paris or anyone else would have a difficult time proving the existence of any folk influence. Critics who maintain its existence seem to be working from the assumption that since it ought to be somewhere, it is. Edgar Piguet studied the genre from a folkloristic

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<sup>83</sup>Pound, Op. Cit., p. 39.

<sup>84</sup>Bartsch, Altfranzösische, II, 53, pp. 172f.

<sup>85</sup>Ibid., II, 63, pp. 185f.

standpoint<sup>86</sup> and came to the conclusion that the themes from the pastourelle as we see it in the twelfth century were more or less original and found their way at a later date into the folkloric repertoire. W. P. Jones has done his work similarly and contemporaneously to Piguet, but reaches the opposite conclusion. He makes numerous assumptions that may be invalid: he finds a positive comparison between a folk theme or two and a number of pastourelles. However, some of the pastourelles postdate our period by hundreds of years, and Jones makes the dubious assumption that

here we have oral transmission of a definite pastourelle theme [la bergère et le loup] from a period that almost certainly antedates the appearance of the artistic pastourelle. (87)

He notes a series of similarities between "the folk pastourelles and those in Old French"; yet he does not really show that the folk genre is comparable to the "courtly" in age or in content. Most of what he says is purely conjectural; some of it is based on Gaston Paris. He makes an airtight case for neither the folk-original ideal or the Central French origin conjecture that he seems to have espoused. To believe him completely, one has to postulate a Savoie-Switzerland beginning, and successive transplants to the Limousin area and thence back north and east. The possibility

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<sup>86</sup>Edgar Piguet, L'Evolution de la Pastourelle (Basel: Societe Suisse des Traditions Populaires, 1927).

<sup>87</sup>W. P. Jones, Op. Cit., p. 188.

remains, of course. There's just no proof.

All told, the successive attempts of many scholars to pin a popular background to the pastourelle have all proven futile. It is just too difficult to cull any unimpeachable folklore elements from such a highly developed aristocratic genre. The possibility exists that the "courtly pastourelle" may be influenced in some obscure way by popular songs; the possibility of the reverse also exists, as does that of independent origins.

#### Classical Tradition.

From the end of the fourth century B.C. and the advent of Theocritus the bucolic tradition thrived. Vergil perfected the eclogue and the genre continued through the Middle Ages in Latin, and continues to exert a certain second-hand influence even today. It would be enormously tempting to try to link the pastourelle with the eclogue. At first glance they are quite similar: they feature shepherds grazing bleating lambs in a meadow during the spring, of course; but from there, there is little obvious connection. The classical Vergilian pastoral is usually in the form of a colloquy--like the French debat--and generally limits its scope to include only shepherds (also here, idealized and often highly talented). The French pastourelle has usually some action in it and a courtly observer, and often there is the matter of a woman, whereas in the Latin the woman, where she exists, is spoken of and not to, and does not enter into the action of the poem.

The eclogues of Vergil are the fruit of a most perfect marriage

between nobility of feeling and felicity of language. They convey the poignancy and the joys of living beautifully and without bombast. They are the result of the perpetual quest for idyllic existence, love, escape. Vergil was the avowed master of the mediaeval poets--his influence was felt in every branch of the arts, but most of all in poetry, where literally hundreds of eclogues appeared, modeled after the Roman prophet who had predicted Christ (or so it was thought). None of these mediaeval eclogues is up to snuff, but many a poet considered himself second to only one.

Landscape-lover, lord of language  
           more than he that sang the Works and Days,  
 All the chosen coin of Fancy  
           flashing out from many a golden phrase...

--Tennyson, To Virgil.

As the eclogue bloomed throughout civilized Europe, it became transformed--into satire, begging-song, religious-didactic verse--in fact, into everything except the fantasy it once was.

Commentary was written on Vergil, and the change was stunning. Not until Sannizaro in the fifteenth century did the eclogue return to its ideal.

What took the place of the eclogue in learned society, as it was forced to take on duties unsuited for it, what fulfilled the search for a literary escape into the sunshine? It was vernacular poetry, and, one might expect, especially the pastourelle. Man has always felt the need to create an ideal world in which he can cope with all the problems. The pastourelle fulfilled this need

for a couple of centuries.

The debt, other than for its place of importance in the psychological world, that the pastourelle owes to the eclogue is unclear. Pillet, for one, felt that there was none, that the innate differences between the two genres precluded any relation between them.<sup>88</sup> Faral believes that there is some connection, one important enough for him to spend a sizable portion of his pastourelle article on.<sup>89</sup>

La bucolique virgilienne...se plait à peindre  
la vie rustique en l'opposant à la vie  
citadine: la pastourelle, nous l'avons vu,  
est essentiellement une peinture des mœurs  
paysannes par opposition aux mœurs  
courtoises.

(90)

Unfortunately, Faral's arguments about the Classics are not much stronger than those of Jones in regard to folk tradition. All he seems to prove is that likely the authors of the pastourelles knew about the Vergilian bucolic. Here again, the influence may exist, but we will never know whether it does. It is more satisfactory to justify the similarities between the two genres in this way: they were created to serve similar purposes; and each of them reflects a little bit of humanity--the necessary but contradictory hungers for adventure and security which motivate us all.

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<sup>88</sup>vide Faral, Op. Cit., p. 245.

<sup>89</sup>Faral, Op. Cit., pp. 245-258.

<sup>90</sup>Ibid., p. 250.

### Towards a Conclusion.

We have investigated in this paper the pastourelle, one of the most intriguing types of poetry in Western history. It reflects the attitudes of the time in a light different from that of any other genre. Its primary purpose, though, as most critics agree, is to provide a diversion for the intelligentsia and the nobility of the period.

The most important psychological factor in the interpretation of the pastourelle is the tension between courtly love and physical fulfillment. Fin'amor requires an incredible energy and faith--as well as great dollops of that virtue known as patience.

Celui-là se connaît peu en amour, qui n'attend  
pas patiemment sa pitie, car amour veut qu'on  
souffre et qu'on attende. (91)

The fin'amans is at the mercy of his lady: he must serve her every caprice:

les amants se comportent vis-à-vis de l'amour,  
comme un vassal vis-à-vis de son suzerain. (92)

And only when he has completed a series of trials is he to be deemed worthy the love of a lady. What tension this must cause! We recall the story of Ulrich vonLichtenstein (supra) who was in the service of his princess-love for a decade and a half before he was

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<sup>91</sup>Rigaut de Barbezieux, in Joseph Anglade, Les Troubadours (Paris: Armand Colin, 1929), p. 30.

<sup>92</sup>Ibid., p. 77.

allowed the honor of being received by her. An artificial code of behaviour was imposed on an entire culture, so what happened? Ulrich got married and raised a family, a sensible thing to do, while pursuing his painful but inspired love life in his free time. A large quantity of people wrote pastourelles. One salient feature of this genre is that it oozes sexual tension just as the courtly chanson hides it. The result is by turns ugly, funny, pathetic. Looking at the pastourelle for the first time, one is intrigued by its facets; on second thought, the beauty and advantages of trobar clus strike one as a happy alternative; but finally one's fascination returns to the pastourelle. For it is the other half of a grand dichotomy within the cortois tradition: it is the vilainie of the courtly poets and the scorn of women and of peasants that contrasts itself with courtliness and fin'amor and largesse. "On the whole," says Simone de Beauvoir, "men in the Middle Ages held a rather unfavorable opinion of women."<sup>93</sup> But this is not true. On the whole, mediaeval man is afraid of that which was other; and he takes it out on others and on himself. There is the theme of rape in many of the pastourelles, just as there is the theme of denial in all phases of courtly literature. At the base of the problem is that the knight cannot really respect himself or others, since he has ceded his body and mind to his lovely lady. Hence the ravishment, the disdain, the urge to see ~~farm~~ children making fools of themselves.

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<sup>93</sup> Simone de Beauvoir, The Second Sex (New York: Knopf, 1953), p. 96.

There is, too, a humorous side of things. W. T. H. Jackson perhaps tells best the overt comic view:

There is nothing pretty or refined about the pastourelle. It is written from the point of view of the upper class and illustrates only too well the social relationship between noble and peasant. Its attitudes are as much a part of the social scene as those of the canzon. Probably it was thought of as a type of comic poem, and it may even have been used as a satire on courtly poetry... The pastourelle persisted for many centuries in various forms, but always kept the basic element of conflict between two social orders and always retained its burlesque-comic treatment.

(94)

This is far better and more insightful than this popular attitude:

...there were many of these gay little things invented by the Provençal poets, and not directly built on classical models.

(95)

But Jackson does not see the intermeshed sadness among the comic elements. For it is a sad thing when a man can be forced to laugh at others.

Nobody has seemed to note the mistake in producing high-flown theories about all the pastourelles from an analysis of just the first two types. Paral takes it on himself to investigate the characters of Types I and II and extrapolate the results to apply to the rest of the poems. The problem is not one of

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<sup>94</sup>W. T. H. Jackson, The Literature of the Middle Ages (New York: Columbia, 1960), p. 254.

<sup>95</sup>Gilbert Highet, The Classical Tradition (New York: Oxford University Press, 1949), p. 166.

The End.

The pastourelle, which at first seems to be a dry and unrewarding subject, is one of the most enlightening branches of mediaeval French literature. A study of this genre, coupled with a sensitivity for the underlying currents of thought, can yield some interesting conclusions about the mediaeval mind and about existence in general. More work deserves to be done here. What we must remember is that without the counterpoint of courtly literature, the pastourelle is meaningless: it cannot be viewed completely by itself. It is a delicate genre, very temperamental, incapable of being taken too seriously or too lightly. Great care must be taken with it, lest it wither away.

Rosalind. They say you are a melancholy fellow.

Jaques. I am so; I do love it better than laughing.

Ros. Those that are in extremity of either are  
abominable fellows, and betray themselves to  
every modern censure worse than drunkards.

Jaq. Why, 'tis good to be sad and say nothing.

Ros. Why, then, 'tis good to be a post.

--Shakespeare, As You Like It

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